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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/53/L.16/Rev.1)

Amendment (A/53/L.42)

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like first of all to join in the words of gratitude expressed in this Hall to the former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Mr. Udovenko, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, and to his Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand.

The reform of the Security Council, as the universal mechanism for the maintenance of international peace and security, remains one of the major aspects of the evolution of the United Nations system and is one of the most heated and controversial issues on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Allow me to state a few facts in support of this thesis. In 1993, 17 Member States submitted their written comments to the Secretary-General, pursuant to the request in General Assembly resolution 47/62, on representativity of the Security Council and the expansion of its membership. Nine replies came from African States, 19 from Asian States, 5 from Eastern European countries, 17 from Latin American and Caribbean States and 20 from Western European and other countries.

The current discussion of this item also shows that the problem of reforming and adapting the Security Council, as one of the principal organs of the United Nations, has become a priority task for the international community. Indeed, Member States consider that the Security Council must reflect changes taking place in the world and the quantitative increase in the membership of the Organization and that it must be more representative, democratic, transparent and accountable. It also must improve its working methods and procedures.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus also attaches the utmost importance to the efforts made to enhance the Council's effectiveness and transparency, to bring its membership into line with the changes in the world map and to improve its working methods. We are open to constructive cooperation with all interested parties in order to find the best possible generally acceptable solutions to the whole reform package.

Counter-productive in this regard are steps to artificially force a negotiation process and to introduce rigid timetables for the adoption of specific decisions. Such an important process as reform of the Security Council must be a subject of broad consensus reflecting the political will of Member States, including the permanent members of the Security Council.

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At this stage, there has emerged a set of elements for reform, and a large number of countries attach priority to their implementation. The central element is no doubt the restructuring of the Council. The Republic of Belarus stands with those Member States that consider an increase in the membership of the Security Council a point of departure for a comprehensive reform of that body.

We have no doubt that an increased membership in the Security Council for the States of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean is dictated by today's geopolitical realities. While we agree with the legitimate aspirations of States in the developing world to play a full-fledged role in a reformed Security Council, Belarus, like other countries in transition, is also interested in opening up suitable opportunities for participation for the countries of Eastern Europe in the work of that body. We are convinced that any formula for quantitative reform of the Security Council that excluded allocation of additional non-permanent seats to the Eastern European region would contradict the spirit and the objectives of reform and contravene the fundamental United Nations principles of sovereign equality of Member States and equitable geographical distribution.

If we are to discuss other aspects of Security Council reform, wholehearted support should be given to steps undertaken to improve the informational and consultative components of Security Council activities, to enhance cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council and to optimize the preparatory process and format of the report submitted by the Council.

In our view, further impetus to reforming the working methods of the Council could be provided by such innovations as the frequent holding — especially during the substantive part of the work of the General Assembly — of open, general debates at the level of Foreign Ministers on the most important issues on the Security Council's agenda, as well as the introduction of the practice of replies from the President of the Security Council to questions and comments of Member States, including to comments made during the discussion of the report of the Council in the plenary. Wider use of the Internet for direct video-conferencing would make more information available to non-members of the Council on operational activities.

Another widely discussed and controversial issue is the problem of the veto. My delegation agrees with the approach of taking an intermediate decision on the veto, through gradually limiting its application and regulating its scope.

We believe that this question must be resolved exclusively on the basis of consensus, as an affirmation of further democratization in the work of the Council, in keeping with the interests of all Member States.

In this context, the delegation of Belarus supports the proposal made for further activities of the Open-ended Working Group and is prepared to make its contribution to achieve mutually acceptable solutions to the question of expansion of the membership of the Security Council, equitable representation and other related matters.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation views the acknowledgement that the membership of the Security Council must be increased to reflect the increased membership of the United Nations, taking into account the significant changes that have taken place on the international scene, as one of the most important and gratifying conclusions reached last year by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. My delegation believes that an enlarged Council should reflect the geopolitical changes in the characteristics of international community and would enhance the legitimacy of Security Council resolutions.

Nonetheless, and in spite of intense and persistent efforts, the discussions in the Working Group encountered many difficulties on a number of questions, notably the size and nature of Council expansion, the methodology for achieving such an expansion, the election of new permanent members, equitable representation for developing countries, the decision-making process and the principle of rotation, not to mention the question of the veto. These questions cannot be ignored, but it has thus far been impossible to resolve them. The divergent views on these matters made it difficult for the Working Group to complete its work and formulate a comprehensive and clear approach to the various elements of this agenda item.

In that connection, Bahrain would like to make reference to a number of points. First, some advocate a quick-fix solution circumventing the need to amend the Charter. Although all Member States are eager to expedite the reform process in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we cannot resort to hasty solutions that will not be approved by the required majority as set out in the Charter as we set

about enacting fundamental changes to the most important international mechanism, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Second, a review of the methodology of and approaches to the reform process could serve as a catalyst for keeping that process on the right track rather than focusing on the controversial elements of every question relating to reform, and for enabling us to retain what we have achieved. Perhaps giving the Working Group enough time to deal with controversial questions would be a good step towards reaching comprehensive agreements and overcoming those differences. Moreover, giving the Working Group adequate time would lead to greater understanding among the members of the international community with respect to the work of the Security Council for the twenty-first century.

Third, Bahrain reiterates the just demand of Arab States that a permanent Arab seat be created on the Security Council. There are a number of reasons for this: Arab representation among the membership of the United Nations exceeds 12 per cent — a substantial proportion that ought to be respected. Moreover, for more than 50 years the Security Council agenda has never lacked an Arab item; I cite in particular questions relating to the situation in the Middle East and to the situation in the occupied Arab territories. At present, Arab representation on the Council depends on a so-called gentlemen's agreement governing the rotation and succession of representation among Arab and Asian and Arab and African States. Any change in the current regional allocations would have a negative impact on that agreement. Thus Arab representation on the Security Council could face the threat of tougher competition for non-permanent seats. Let me illustrate my point by noting, for example, that States in the Asian Group have already been selected as candidates to fill the seats allocated to that group through the year 2013. Enlargement of the Council will inevitably lead to an increased number of such candidatures. A permanent Arab seat is therefore a matter of great urgency and importance to us.

Fourth, my country views transparency in the work of the Security Council as a question of paramount importance, because any question before the Council is of interest to a large number of countries — particularly to the countries directly concerned. Practical steps towards transparency would make it possible for States not members of the Security Council to be informed about what is going on in the Council. Here, Bahrain encourages the expanded use of the Arria formula to make it possible for Council members to be briefed by non-member parties concerned with a given question. That formula is a step towards the full application of rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Presidential briefings for non-members of the Council on what took place in a meeting, along with other similar measures, enhance transparency.

Fifth, during its current tenure on the Security Council, Bahrain has worked towards holding more frequent public meetings of the Council. This is because of our eagerness to achieve transparency in the work of the Council in a manner which accords with the wishes that most countries expressed in the Open-ended Working Group.

Sixth, in cooperation with some other members of the Security Council, Bahrain has sought on a number of occasions to review the sanctions regime imposed by the Council with a view to ensuring that the sanctions are focused directly on their target rather than having an impact on innocent civilians, who unjustly suffer the consequences. We hope that the Security Council will be able in the future to study and review the sanctions regime, and make it more focused and hence more just.

My delegation would like here to recall that, with respect to an increase in the membership of the Council, the original trend was towards increasing the non-permanent seats, in order to attain a balance between the number of States on the Council and the increase in membership of the Organization at large. As time passed, we saw this concept being relegated to a secondary position to the point that it came to be referred to as a fall-back position. In other words, if it proved difficult to increase the permanent membership, there would be broader acceptance of an increase in the non-permanent membership. This trend does not appear to be compatible with the nature of the increase in the United Nations membership, the majority of which consists of developing countries that aspire to playing a role on the Security Council.

Moreover, an increase in the permanent membership will undoubtedly be at the expense of an increase in the non-permanent membership, particularly as proportionality between the Council's membership and that of the United Nations always governs any idea or project aimed at increasing Council membership. It might therefore be advisable to reconsider this trend.

Finally, while underlining the aforementioned questions and others that would require additional time to go into and which are on the agenda of the Working Group, the delegation of the State of Bahrain believes that the Working Group must clarify the principles that are to guide its discussions, particularly with regard to those related to respect of Charter provisions and the formulation of satisfactory solutions on the basis of general agreement among the membership of the United Nations that reflects a future vision of a reformed Security Council. In particular, this should include taking steps to reform the Council within the general reform of the United Nations as a whole and not in isolation from it.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): For the sixth consecutive year, I have the privilege of addressing the General Assembly on the issue of Security Council reform. Allow me to say at the outset, Mr. President, that your leadership, wisdom and renowned legal experience are the best guarantees for the entire membership that the issue of Security Council reform will be treated with the determination, impartiality and foresight it requires.

Six years ago, our task was to weigh carefully how to make the Security Council a better instrument of today's United Nations. Six years later, the task remains the same. From the founding fathers we inherited a mechanism designed to serve the world at mid-century, but things have greatly changed since then. The challenge we now face is to make the Council equitably reflect the membership of today — some 185 Member States, many of which were colonies back in 1945 and are now proud, free and sovereign nations. Our task is to make the Council the true expression of all Member States, accountable to the General Assembly, and not the expression of just a select few accountable only to themselves.

Our former colleague, Ambassador Owada of Japan, once remarked that "Security Council reform is of paramount importance to international relations in the next century". Indeed, the instrument that we forge will be our legacy to future generations. In our efforts to find common ground, let me say without preambles that to ignore the historic challenge before us by simply adhering to the status quo would be a grave abdication of our duties and responsibilities. As an Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, wrote in the fourteenth century, "civilizations decline if they lose their capacity to comprehend and absorb change". Let that reflection be our guide.

It is generally agreed that Security Council reform should address two areas: first, enlargement of the Council and, secondly, its working methods and procedures. A really acute controversy has arisen over the increase in membership. Delegations are deeply divided over which categories should be affected — permanent, non-permanent or both — and whether we should contemplate creating a new category of "permanent rotating seats".

From the start of this exercise, Italy thought that the best solution would be to increase the number of non-permanent seats. Accordingly, in 1993 we presented a proposal to add 8 to 10 new non-permanent, elective seats — as I prefer to call them, rather than non-permanent — to be rotated among the 24 to 30 countries that contribute most to the purposes of the United Nations, in the spirit of Article 23 of the Charter. Among the advantages of this solution is the fact that it would allow more frequent participation in the Security Council for those that shoulder a larger burden and greater responsibility, not only in terms of financial resources but also in terms of troops for peacekeeping operations and other activities. At the same time, the Italian solution would provide much easier access to the Council for all other Member States, since the customary, tough competition with larger countries within their respective regional groups would be drastically reduced.

When we introduced our proposal, 80 or so countries expressed their support or interest. Clearly, this is not yet enough. That is why Italy has repeatedly indicated in this Hall, through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lamberto Dini, its willingness to agree to any other enlargement formula, provided that it does not prejudice a possible common European seat on the Council, distance Italy — which has become the fifth largest producer of wealth in the world — from the other main industrial countries, or increase the number of countries that are more equal than others in our Organization.

One such formula that we are ready to support is the so-called fall-back position of the Non-Aligned Movement. That position, as delegates know, proposes an increase for the time being only in elective seats, in the event that no agreement is reached on other categories of membership. The increase in permanent members would, of course, continue to be studied and examined. In the meantime, we could, for instance, increase the number of elective seats from 10 to 16, for a total of 21 seats in the future Security Council. This way, a region such as Africa could soon count on, instead of the current three seats, five seats — one for each of its subregions. I think that we should never forget that Africa represents the

largest regional group in our common home, while, by one of the unique contradictions of our Organization, it is also the group most under-represented in the Council. Furthermore, considering that the Non-Aligned Movement now has 114 members, it should not be too difficult to find a few other votes and reach the quorum needed for this solution to be adopted.

Turning now to the so-called cluster II issues, here is an area where the Open-ended Working Group has indeed made significant progress. The improvements suggested for the Council's working methods include a more substantial report of the Security Council to the General Assembly; an increase in the number of formal open meetings; greater transparency in informal consultations; greater involvement of troop-contributing countries; prompter and more detailed briefings on the Council's activities by its President-in-office; and the ready availability of texts and documents examined by the Council. Some of these suggestions are already being implemented, but they depend entirely on the President-in-Office, who might decide to ignore them at will. Let us strike while the iron is hot by formalizing the proposals on which general agreement has already been achieved. More ambitious transparency measures could be agreed in the course of time.

Allow me at this point to express my sincere appreciation for the efforts of the two co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama, for what they have done in order to try to reach general agreement on cluster II. I think they will be remembered for it.

In this House, I am supposed to always call a spade a spade, and today I will do it again. Since this debate started last Thursday, a climate of tension has prevailed centred on a major procedural issue: the critical question of the majority required to adopt resolutions on Security Council reform which have elements or implications of Charter amendments. You, Mr. President, promptly intervened to ease the tension and promoted instead negotiations aimed at reaching a consensus solution. I must say that against all odds, you appear to have succeeded. For this, we all, and I underline "all", owe you and your closest collaborators sincere appreciation.

Given the Council's crucial importance, whatever reform we approve must enjoy the backing of the overwhelming majority of Member States. Otherwise we will compromise the effectiveness of the reformed Council by depriving it of the legitimacy, credibility and authority it needs. We must never forget what an immense commitment we, the Member States, make in conferring upon the Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and in accepting, as Article 24 of the Charter stipulates, that

> "in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

If they act on our behalf, they must be accountable to us.

The original mandate establishing the Working Group, General Assembly resolution 48/26, called for general agreement as the yardstick for any reform. But what does general agreement mean? There is no definition of it in the Charter or in the rules of procedure. However, no matter how one interprets it, one conclusion is inescapable: general agreement cannot mean less than two thirds of all Member States. So one had assumed that the reform was on a safe road. Instead, out of the blue, on 20 March 1997, the then President of the General Assembly promoted a scheme that would enact the enlargement of the Council not by a single vote in the General Assembly, as was the case in 1963, but in three separate stages with different majorities, namely: first, an initial resolution to increase the number of permanent members; secondly, a second resolution selecting the new permanent members; and thirdly, a third resolution to formally amend the Charter. According to this plan, only the last of the three resolutions would have to be approved by a two-thirds majority of all Member States, while for the two previous ones, a majority of two thirds only of those present and voting would suffice.

Anyone who is familiar with the General Assembly's voting patterns knows what this means. When the time comes to vote on thorny issues, a significant number of delegations are absent or abstain. If only 120 were to vote, for instance, then the required majority would go down to 80, less than half of the general membership of the General Assembly, which, as members know, is made up of 185 States.

Thus, in order to accommodate the national interests of a few, a constitutional absurdity was devised. New permanent seats could be established and new permanent members selected with less, or even considerably less, than the 124 votes required for Charter amendments. It has been rightly noted that this would mean that the same majority used to elect a member of the Economic and Social Council for three years — two thirds of those present and voting — would also be enough to establish, to create new permanent members that would serve in the

Security Council for ever, in perpetuity. It would be tantamount to a national parliament changing, or aiming to change, its country's constitution by a vote of less than half of its members. Moreover, I ask, can any great country really expect to enter the Security Council not by the main door of Article 108, but by the back door of Article 18 of the Charter?

Now, once the resolution which has been agreed under your auspices, Mr. President, has been approved at the end of this debate, as we hope it will, we will no longer be under the threat of that legal anomaly, as we were in the last two sessions of the General Assemblies: a situation that led 21 Member States last year to introduce draft resolution A/52/L.7, and 35 Members this year to introduce A/53/L.16. If the newly agreed text is adopted today by consensus or by near consensus, the principle that any decision or resolution by the General Assembly on Security Council reform must be taken by a two-thirds majority of all Member States will be solemnly reaffirmed. Thus, today's debate, rather than proving contentious and divisive, as had been anticipated, will instead have helped re-establish a climate of mutual trust and will inject new momentum into the reform process.

Allow me to conclude by assuring the Assembly that Italy will continue to make its active contribution to the Open-ended Working Group for the achievement of the reform of the Security Council. In this endeavour, our actions will continue to be guided by the sacrosanct principles of democracy and participation, transparency and accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): The transformations in international society following decolonization and the admission of dozens of States to the United Nations led to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 1991 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, on increasing the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council, a resolution of which Cameroon was a sponsor.

The virtual consensus that we saw at that time stemmed from a need felt by all to reflect on the composition of the Council and on the quantitative change in the Members of the United Nations family. It also stemmed from a unanimous conviction that the increased or strengthened presence of new States was a condition for greater effectiveness on the Council.

The increase in the membership of the United Nations, which increased from 113 in 1963 to 154 in 1980, prompted a certain number of countries, including Cameroon, to raise at the thirty-fifth session the question of another expansion of the Security Council. That was the substance and the objective of draft resolution A/35/L.34/Rev.1, which requested that the number of non-permanent members be raised from 10 to 16. The debates on that draft resolution were heated, and no solution could be found.

It seemed to some that an expansion of the Council as requested would institutionalize the notion of the democratization of international relations and thereby contained the seeds of changing the balance of power in such a way that it could slip out of their control. The debate was closed.

The qualitative changes in international society after the end of the cold war made it more necessary than ever that there be a reform of the Security Council relating not only to its composition but also to its working methods, its functioning and the decision-making methods that dated back to the days of East-West rivalry.

We are gratified that the General Assembly, 30 years after the first expansion of the Security Council, established through resolution 48/26 an Open-ended Working Group to consider all aspects of the question of increasing the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. We have before us today the progress report of that Group, which held six substantive sessions during the fifty-second session.

We wish, Mr. President, to express our profound appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Hennadiy Udovenko, who led the work of the Group with great skill. Our thanks go as well to the Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Asda Jayanama and Ambassador Wilhelm Breitenstein.

The report submitted to us reflects not only the seriousness of the discussions, but also the very high priority attached by Member States to the reform of the Security Council. The stage reached in the work reveals, we must agree, the extreme complexity of the question, and calls for us to move forward boldly and wisely.

We are counting on you, Sir, and on your outstanding qualities as a diplomat and talented jurist to impel the Open-ended Working Group to make decisive progress in the accomplishment of its mandate. The peoples of the United Nations are waiting.

The third millennium is approaching rapidly, bringing new challenges and legitimate concerns. With it, questions about the role and functioning of the United Nations will become more acute and the appeals for its in-depth reform, to make it more democratic and more consistent with the aspirations of our peoples, more urgent. As was stated from this rostrum on 24 October 1996 by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon and at that time Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU):

> "The United Nations must adapt to the international environment now prevailing at the end of the century, in order better to do its work today. The necessary reforms in its principal organs — the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat — must allow all nations, without discrimination, to participate actively in the conduct of international public affairs.
>
> "This means, *inter alia*, greater transparency within the Security Council, in its working methods and in the equitable geographical representation of all regions of the world." (*A/51/PV.40, p. 5*)

Everything has therefore been said and the guiding principles exist. The United Nations must be adapted to the new international environment and all nations must participate actively in the conduct and management of international affairs — in other words, democratization. This means transparency; we would also include good governance and emphasize equitable geographic representation.

Cameroon therefore endorses the position adopted by the Organization of African Unity in Harare in 1997. In the light of the transformations to which I have referred, we believe it necessary that the total number of Council members be raised to 26. The proposed increase concerns permanent members, whose number would rise from 5 to 10, and non-permanent members, whose number would rise from 10 to 16, as was proposed at the thirty-fifth session in the draft resolution contained in document A/35/L.34/Rev.1.

As regards distribution, Africa, which has the largest number of States Members of the United Nations, should, in the logic of equitable geographic representation, be given two of the five new permanent seats and three additional non-permanent seats. In specific regard to the permanent seats that would be allocated to Africa, the OAU, at its Ouagadougou summit in June 1998, adopted original rotation modalities to which we will refer in due course.

Would this expansion we are advocating make decision-making difficult or hamper the effectiveness of the Council's decisions. We do not believe so, for reasons on which we will elaborate in due course in the Working Group. At this stage, we wish to say the following. The effectiveness so often invoked to oppose expansion arises, we believe, from a concept that reduces contributions that can be made to peacekeeping to military might alone or to the capacity of States to intervene militarily. Even under that hypothesis, however, it is hard to see how such effectiveness could suffer under the proposed expansion.

It is often forgotten that the effectiveness of an organization is not a function merely of rapid decision-making. It is more closely related — and this is important — to the achievement of the objectives of the various members of the organization. It is also forgotten that the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security may also be enhanced by consistency in negotiations to seek peace and reduce tensions, or by mediation to end a conflict. In this regard, small States or States without major military power can make an outstanding contribution to the maintenance or establishment of peace. In fact, can it really be said that the current composition of the Council has always assured it great effectiveness and speed in the making or implementation of decisions?

The expansion promoted by Cameroon does not seek to hinder the effective functioning of the Council, which must, we repeat, preserve its capacity to adopt without harmful delays the measures necessary to international peacekeeping and peacemaking. The reform we seek would contribute both to enhancing the Council's legitimacy and to ensuring its effectiveness.

As to the right of veto, Cameroon believes it should be used in a manner compatible with the responsibilities incumbent upon permanent members by virtue of the Charter. Generally speaking, if, at the conclusion of reform, that right is to be preserved, it would seem fair to us that it be extended to the new permanent members. Furthermore, its use should be limited to actions undertaken in the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter. However, bearing in mind the differences of opinion that remain on this subject, Cameroon would support further consultations in this respect, especially with the five permanent members of the Council.

Security Council reform involves us all. Together, we must work to expand the Council in a reasonable way. The maintenance of international peace and security is a collective responsibility. Together, we must work to improve the working methods of a more transparent Security Council. Its credibility and legitimacy will hang on its ability effectively to discharge the responsibility it assumes on behalf of all Member States.

We recognize that the task is not easy. My delegation hopes that the search for lasting solutions reflecting the general will can prevail over hasty initiatives containing the seeds of division or confrontation. The peoples of the United Nations want to move forward as friends — in other words, together. They no longer wish to move forward side by side, because parallel lines do not meet. Above all, they no longer wish to move against one another.

In that respect, we are counting on you, Sir, to harmonize and synthesize into a balanced and positive consensus text the concerns expressed by the sponsors in draft resolution A/53/L.16/Rev.1 and in the proposed amendments contained in document A/53/L.42.

We are convinced that it is possible to reach a consensus that will make it possible to express the general will of Member States to arrive at a Security Council that is more transparent and more democratic because it benefits from the support of the immense majority of our countries.

Mr. Kiwanuka (Uganda): The Uganda delegation welcomes once again the opportunity to address the plenary of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on the very important subject of Security Council reform. Before I proceed, allow me to look back to where we began.

Formally, the United Nations Security Council was established as just one of the principal organs of the United Nations, but clearly it is the Organization's dominant political body. It is the only political organ of the United Nations system on which nations have conferred the power to take actions that are in keeping with their responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

The announcement by United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher in early 1993 that the Clinton Administration would actively support a limited expansion of the Security Council put the issue of Council reform squarely on the front burner of the international agenda. Security Council reform is part and parcel of the comprehensive agenda for reforming the entire United Nations system so that it reflects the realities of today's world. Since 1993, and more so since 1996, there have been serious discussions on reform and expansion of the Security Council and useful proposals have been made, suggesting compromise solutions to what are potentially difficult issues.

Uganda wants to see progress from the general to the concrete in order to bring this endless debate to tangible conclusions. Reform of the Security Council, of course, is not just a matter of changing who sits around the table. It extends to questions of accountability, voting power and procedures. That is to say, the reforms must address expansion in both the categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent. As we approach the new millennium, the reformed Council must reflect the global changes of the past half-century and achieve an equitable geographical distribution. Regions such as Africa which heretofore have been under-represented deserve to be adequately represented in the reformed Council.

To this end, at the Harare Summit in June 1997, the African heads of State and Government reaffirmed Africa's claim to at least two permanent seats on the Security Council. The seats would be allotted to countries by a decision of Africans themselves, in accordance with a system of rotation based on the current established criteria of the Organization of African Unity and subsequent elements which might improve upon these criteria.

Reform means also that the gulf between the five permanent members of the Council and the elected members who today serve a two-year term must be bridged. The elected representatives frequently complain about being presented with faits accomplis which make them feel marginalized. This is why we call for transparency in the working methods of the Council.

Reform means ending the perpetuation of exclusive, discriminatory privileges which are obnoxious to the democratic spirit. Organizations or institutions which build walls around themselves belong to another age.

Since it is permanence and the use of the veto which determine the status of the Security Council, the new permanent members should not be discriminated against. They must enjoy all the rights and privileges of their membership.

Let me conclude. By nature I am a strong believer in accommodation. I am also an optimist. The historical

experience of the reform of institutions shows clearly that the end product is almost always the result of compromise, unless there has been a violent revolution to overthrow the institution. In that case the victorious party imposes its will. But that is unlikely to be the case here at United Nations.

Uganda acknowledges that the issues involved are difficult. For that very reason, those issues must be approached in a spirit of compromise. There must be compromise on the issue of enlargement in both membership categories, permanent and non-permanent.

Since the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in 1996, figures for total Security Council membership ranging from a low of 21 to a high of 28 have been suggested. We believe and are confident that given a spirit of goodwill and a desire to move forward by the vast majority of delegations, a compromise between these two figures can be reached. What we all want is a reformed, representative and effective Security Council. Separating the two categories, permanent and non-permanent, and suggesting that we move with one for the time being and leave the other unchanged does not serve the cause of reform.

If all delegations agree to compromise on their respective positions for the sake of our common future, it is possible to move forward without needing to invoke any Chapter or Article of the Charter. For the sake of our common future, the Uganda delegation calls for compromise, because without it we shall remain at a stalemate.

Let us be judged by history and let it be written that while we were here and graced this place, and you, Mr. President, sat in that Chair, the delegates were able to see the larger picture and fashioned into reality the dreams of millions who revere the United Nations.

Finally, let me end with the words of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, spoken in April this year:

> "We are transforming our United Nations not as an end in itself, but as a means to better carry out our mission of peace, development and human rights." (*A/52/PV.83, p. 4*)

That is the challenge before us.

Mr. Sklar (United States of America): Along with the vast majority of Members of this Organization, my delegation supports expansion of the Security Council. There are areas where many Members are in agreement as to the nature and mechanism for expansion. In other areas, significant differences exist. The Open-ended Working Group has been a constructive and appropriate forum for us to continue to make progress towards our common goal.

My delegation felt that a debate and possible votes on draft resolution A/53/L.16 or amendments thereto would therefore have been unnecessary and destructive to the delicate deliberative process that we hope will ultimately bring us towards our objective. We questioned the rationale for introducing the draft resolution and its amendments last week. To our knowledge, no Members were looking for or working towards a quick fix or any other mechanism that would not be supported by the vast majority of Members. No resolutions, framework or otherwise, were about to be dropped on this body for action. Thus we are pleased that the co-sponsors of the draft resolutions and amendments have reached agreement on language that will achieve our common objective yet not compromise or challenge the Charter.

For the past two days, we have heard over 60 speakers state their views on how best to reshape the Security Council. Much of the debate has focused on technical aspects of the Charter amendment process, in particular required voting majorities. That this should become an issue more than 50 years after the United Nations Charter entered into force is surprising. Articles 18 and 108 of the Charter contain clear provisions on General Assembly voting. These have consistently been in practice over the past half-century.

The drafters of the Charter foresaw a time when adjustments might be needed and also set forth, in Chapter XVIII, provisions governing Charter amendment. These have been applied on the few occasions when changes have been made. The Charter, which entered into force in 1945, was amended to increase the number of Security Council members in 1965 and to increase the size of the Economic and Social Council.

More recently, at its fiftieth session the General Assembly considered a recommendation from the Sixth Committee to amend Articles 53, 77 and 107 of the Charter in order to delete obsolete clauses. In resolution 50/52, the Assembly expressed its intention to initiate the procedure set out in Article 108 to amend the Charter by deleting those clauses at its earliest appropriate future session.

That resolution was adopted by a vote of 155 to 0 with 3 abstentions, only one of which was directly related to the proposed Charter amendment. This vote reflected the general agreement in the Assembly to proceed to amend the Charter in a specified manner. It established that the political will exists to accept the Sixth Committee recommendation, and although adoption of resolution 50/52 legally required only a simple majority, politically it needed an expression of overwhelming support.

This is a sound basis on which to proceed in adopting resolutions related to Charter amendment. Pursuant to Article 108 of the Charter, only — I repeat: only — the adoption of an actual amendment requires an affirmative vote of two thirds of the membership, but we should bear in mind that any resolution concerning Charter amendment should command the widest possible support from United Nations Members. Therefore, as the consensus text indicates, no draft resolution on this matter should be put to a vote without the clear and prior indication of support from two thirds of the membership.

As efforts resume in the Open-ended Working Group, we can all can agree that achieving such backing for future amendments should be our goal. Proposals should not be pushed to a decision before they enjoy sufficient support, nor should obstructionist tactics be employed to impede progress.

The consensus draft resolution that has resulted from this debate underscores the importance of backing Charter change with widespread political commitment. The consultations and cooperation that led to this consensus result will, I hope, set the scene for future constructive work. Having put these procedural issues into perspective, the Open-ended Working Group can now direct its attention to the substantive questions relating to changing the composition of the Security Council. We wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for his support and help in guiding us to that result last week.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The meeting will be suspended for 10 minutes to allow the Secretariat to prepare the necessary documentation.

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In connection with the item under consideration, which the Assembly has been discussing over the past three days, I should like at this time to draw the attention of all members of delegations to a draft resolution that the presidency of the General Assembly is submitting to the Assembly for consideration. The draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.46, is now being distributed.

In accordance with information gathered by the presidency, the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.16/Rev.1 have informed me that they have agreed to withdraw it. The draft amendments contained in document A/53/L.42 have also been withdrawn.

Draft resolution A/53/L.46 is the result of broad consultations between the various delegations during the past few days. The draft resolution therefore reflects the shared intention of all delegations to reach a consensus on this extremely sensitive issue.

I therefore invite delegations to adopt the draft resolution by consensus. Over the past hours, there has been an intensive exchange of views, and I therefore appeal to delegations for understanding and request them to forgo statements in explanation of position. In a sense, the positions of all delegations are reflected in the text.

I shall now read out the text of the draft resolution submitted by the President of the General Assembly and contained in document A/53/L.46. The draft resolution reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Mindful of Chapter XVIII of the Charter, and of the importance of reaching general agreement as referred to in resolution 48/26, determines not to adopt any resolution or decision on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of the General Assembly."

It had been my impression that the Assembly was prepared to proceed to take a decision on this draft resolution and to adopt it by consensus, but I have been informed that some delegations have requested a brief suspension to enable them to conduct consultations on this matter. The President is always sensitive to the wishes of delegations; I wish at the same time to say that a great deal of effort has been made in this process of reconciling a variety of views, and that it would be desirable for the time to be used solely to reaffirm the consensus that was worked out so painstakingly.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are grateful to all representatives without exception for their efforts to reach a consensus after the necessary consultations on the draft resolution (A/53/L.46) that I, as President, proposed and read out.

I would like to add that the text of that draft resolution contains some technical difficulties in the Arabic, Chinese, French and Russian versions. The necessary corrections will therefore be made in the final versions.

In accordance with what I stated earlier, I wish to announce that consensus exists on draft resolution A/53/L.46.

I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.46.

Draft resolution A/53/L.46 was adopted (resolution 53/30).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish once again to thank each and every member of this body for the spirit of understanding, tolerance and agreement they have displayed.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that in the light of the resolution that has just been adopted and in keeping with the positive climate that emanates from it, I intend to convene in the near future a meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. The objective of that meeting will be to elect the two Vice-Chairmen of the Group. In that connection, I expect to put forward for the consideration of the Working Group the candidacies of the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador John de Saram, and the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Ambassador Hans Dahlgren. It is also the intention of the presidency to establish the initial outlines of a programme of work that we will be coordinating in the coming days with the proposed Vice-Chairmen.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 59.

Agenda item 33

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/554 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.38)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Romania to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.38.

Mrs. Zamfirescu (Romania): I am honoured to address this prestigious audience on an issue of utmost relevance for the world community: the strengthening of international cooperation to support the entrenchment of democratic governance in countries that have embarked on the road to democratization. By endeavouring to reach this goal, at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium, we take care equally of the dignity and welfare of those whom we represent here and of the future of our children.

Strengthening democracy is a must for strengthening peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. There is no better way to meet the goals of this international year of human rights, marked by the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, than by renewing our determination jointly to promote and consolidate democratic values and practices throughout the world. That means, *inter alia*, learning to master the subtle chemistry inherent to democratic governance — a chemistry suggested in the inspired remark that "in democracies, those who lead, follow; and those who follow, lead".

The international community has paid increased attention to the role that shared democratic values can play in solving major national issues and in improving the international environment. Ten years ago, the new or restored democracies gathered for the first time in Manila. They reaffirmed their commitment to the democratization of their societies in Managua in 1994, and, more recently, in Bucharest. On each of those occasions the interdependence and mutual reinforcement between democracy, development and good governance were highlighted.

The orientations, principles and guidelines that came out of those three conferences endorsed the wisdom that a democratic system of government — which is by nature an open learning process — is the most solid bedrock for ensuring lasting solutions to the political, economic and social problems facing all societies. They have also stressed the importance of international cooperation aimed at supporting democratization. There is no doubt that in our complex era of globalization, abounding in new opportunities but also in new challenges and uncertainties, the virtues of international cooperation are more needed than ever.

No organization is better placed and equipped to contribute to the promotion of these goals than the United Nations, because no other enjoys its scope and legitimacy. In our opinion, it is high time that a system-wide agenda for democratization be considered. It would naturally fit into the ongoing efforts devoted to enhancing the United Nations ability to cope more effectively with the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Millennium Assembly could provide an excellent opportunity for the launching of the suggested project.

Romania has been an active supporter of the activities carried out by the United Nations system with respect to democratization and good governance. By setting up a stable democratic system, based on full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens — a system that includes a viable framework for inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation — Romania has also brought its own input to the consolidation of democracy throughout the world. As a direct result thereof, we think, my country was honoured to host the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development in Bucharest, in September 1997.

We acknowledge the valuable assistance extended to Romania by the United Nations and other international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union. In doing so, we recognize that domestic endeavours to irreversibly entrench democratic governance have a greater chance of success when properly shouldered by the international community.

It is our hope that, alongside the valuable experience of other new or restored democracies, our own experience can contribute to shaping a new political culture and setting useful guidelines for future United Nations programmes on democratization and good governance.

I wish to express, on behalf of the Romanian Government, our most sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and his staff for the steady support extended to the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

We commend the report of the Secretary-General, which clearly points to the progress achieved and the future prospects for the activities of the United Nations system in the field of democratization and good governance.

It is very encouraging that the report attaches particular importance to the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations of the Third International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies. Allow me to mention also the setting up in New York of a follow-up mechanism. This flexible and functional structure has brought together representatives of the Member States and of the United Nations system as well as academics and non-governmental actors. In a spirit of open dialogue and cooperation, the mechanism has designed and begun to implement a series of concrete proposals, such as the creation of United Nations Web sites on the subject of democratization, the establishment of a Democracy Forum, the setting up of an inventory of activities and programmes and a questionnaire for the self-assessment of Governments' needs for assistance in the field of democratization.

The generous offer of the Government of Benin to host the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies ensures the continuity of this important movement — a dynamic movement to whose Asian, Latin American and European signposts will soon be added the Africa one.

Romania, in its capacity as current Chair of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, takes particular honour in submitting to the attention of the General Assembly the draft resolution (A/53/L.38) on agenda item 33, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

I am pleased to introduce this draft proposal on behalf of the 77 sponsors listed in document A/53/L.38, as well as of the following additional sponsors: Albania, Australia, Belarus, Cape Verde, Iceland, India, Lithuania, Morocco and Turkmenistan. This brings the total number of sponsors to 86.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution recalls the major moments and documents of the movement of new and restored democracies and reiterates the principles agreed upon by the General Assembly at its previous sessions. It takes note of the progress achieved so far by the movement and of the most significant conferences, seminars and workshops on democratization and good governance organized in 1998, as well as those currently being planned under the auspices of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would welcome the report of the Secretary-General and express its appreciation for the activities carried out by the United Nations system in the field of democratization. It would welcome the measures taken by the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination within their respective organizations aimed at better coordinating their democracy-related work.

The General Assembly would also express appreciation for the work carried out by the follow-up mechanism to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and invites the Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to continue to contribute actively to this process. An important reference concerns the convening of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Cotonou in the year 2000.

The draft resolution under consideration deals with one of the most promising and challenging trends of the contemporary world: the process of democratization. It emphasizes the need for an increased role of the United Nations in its consolidation.

In conclusion, I wish to express on behalf of the 86 sponsors the hope that this draft resolution will be adopted without a vote, as have such draft resolutions at previous sessions.

Please recall what I said at the beginning: this is not only for those we represent today but also for the future of our children.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. In addition, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country, Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union attaches particular importance to the issue of democracy and democratization. The Union follows the process of new and restored democracies and the activities carried out by the United Nations in the field of democratization and governance with great interest.

The current wave of democratization has brought far-reaching changes in all regions of the world, including in countries which are now members of the European Union. This global process of democratization is reflected by the International Conferences of New and Restored Democracies. The movement of new and restored democracies has gained strength and momentum and continues to contribute to democratization processes worldwide, most recently through its Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which was held in Bucharest in 1997. The European Union participated in the Ministerial Meeting on the follow-up to the Bucharest Conference, which was held a few weeks ago alongside this session of the General Assembly.

We welcome the increasingly important role played by the group here at the United Nations, as reflected in the strong support for resolutions on democratization in the General Assembly. The European Union warmly welcomes the invitation by the Government and the people of Benin to host the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in the year 2000 in Cotonou, bringing the movement of new and restored democracies to the African continent.

One can rightly say that we are living in an era of democracy. Today, democracy is unchallenged as the best form of governance. There are no serious and attractive alternatives available. The reason is simple: experience has proved that democracy is not only the best form of governance to ensure the dignity and freedom of every member of society; it is also the best means for preventing conflict and making prosperity possible. Democratization has been both the objective of and the instrument for resolving conflicts. Democracy also enables societies to develop and make use of their full potential towards sustainable development. Today, the world speaks out against any change of democratic government by undemocratic means, such as *coups d'état*, and does not accept regimes that rule against the expressed will of the people.

The holding of elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a positive climate was an important step in the implementation process of the Dayton Accords and paved the way towards enhanced stability, normalcy and reconciliation of that country. The Union is particularly satisfied with the high voter turnout, which gives proof of the growing democratic maturity of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the positive and constructive role played by the police and by the media: It is hoped that the elections will lead to a society in which religious and cultural differences no longer divide communities, but are respected and tolerated.

The European Union welcomes the recent elections in Cambodia. The very high number of registered voters who turned up at the polling stations to cast their ballots has given a clear signal that the Cambodian people are embracing democracy and are determined to decide their own political future. We are pleased at the recent progress made towards the establishment of a new Government.

The European Union also welcomes the process of democratization which has begun in Nigeria in recent months. Under the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission, and with the assistance of international institutions, elections are being prepared at all levels. The European Union reaffirms once again its support for this process. The holding of free and fair elections leading to the handover to a civilian Government in May 1999 is the basis for stability and prosperity that will enable Nigeria to regain a place within the international community, in keeping with its aspirations and capabilities.

It is the sincere hope of the European Union that the wave of democratization will serve as an example for situations in which the lack of democratic processes continues. Thus, the European Union remains deeply concerned at the lack of any positive response from the Burmese authorities to the repeated calls on them to take steps towards the promotion of democracy, human rights and national reconciliation.

Nowadays, almost every Government calls itself democratic, but not all live up to this high standard of governance. The number of "electoral" democracies is impressive, but some warn of a rise of "illiberal" democracies. Most countries have adopted several features of a formal democracy, in particular the holding of elections, but do not provide for a sufficiently fair political process that allows the people to participate fully in the political process. In some countries, successful first multi-party elections have been followed by undemocratic rule and questionable second elections. Therefore, in addition to holding genuine and periodic elections, the accountability of the rulers, the rule of law and respect for human rights and political and civic pluralism are essential ingredients of sustainable democracy. The new and restored democracies have a key role to play in bringing about such a common understanding of democracy and its minimum conditions and principles that have to be met. In this context, the European Union welcomes the guidelines for strengthening the policies and principles of new and restored democracies adopted at the Bucharest Conference.

Democratization is a long-term process. Democracies are never perfect or complete. They need constant renewal and adaptation to changing circumstances. A vibrant civil society plays a crucial role in this regard. Also within the European Union, a lively debate is under way about the challenges to democratic governance stemming from the deepening of European integration. Making the institutions of the Union more democratic and bringing them closer to the people is one of the main challenges for the European Union in the years ahead.

The Union believes that the consolidation of new and restored democracies that have embarked on the process of democratization must be at the forefront of our joint endeavours. This consolidation process must make democracy so stable, so deeply institutionalized and legitimate, that all significant political actors, in power and in opposition alike, fully embrace democratic procedures of governance.

The United Nations system has an impressive record of assisting democratization processes around the world, be it as part of peacekeeping or peace-building efforts, in the form of electoral assistance or through its governance programmes. I would like to commend in particular the work of the Electoral Assistance Division as a focal point for all requests to the United Nations in the field of electoral assistance. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is substantially contributing to democratization through its programmes aimed at national capacity and institution-building and in the field of governance and participation. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provides support to new or restored democracies through technical cooperation projects and human rights field presences, including through an emphasis on human rights aspects of elections. Without full respect for human rights and

fundamental freedoms, real democracy cannot be achieved. At the same time, democracy provides the best framework for the protection and promotion of human rights. The European Union is supporting many of these activities and will continue to work closely with the United Nations in this field.

The European Union is strongly committed to democratic governance. Under the Treaty of the European Union, democracy and respect for human rights are a precondition for membership of the Union. The consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights are key objectives of the common foreign and security policy of the Union. In line with the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference to give higher priority in resource allocation to governance, democracy and participation, support for democratization processes is a key element of assistance programmes of the European Union. Democracy and human rights are a key element of the policy dialogue pursued in the framework of cooperation between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The European Commission explained its policies in a communication on democratization, the rule of law and respect for human rights and good governance in March 1998.

In line with the special focus called for by the Secretary-General in his report on Africa, the European Union recently adopted a Common Position on Human Rights, Democratic Principles, the Rule of Law and Good Governance in Africa with the aim of strengthening cooperation with African partners in this field. The Union is financing numerous projects and programmes for the strengthening of democratic governance and a culture of human rights. In many countries, the European Union is providing electoral assistance or deploying election observers; the European Union support for the recent elections in Cambodia is a case in point.

The European Union recently approved guidelines for European Union electoral observation. These guidelines set out the conditions that must be met for the European Union to be prepared to get involved in electoral processes and to send election observers. This includes the respect of certain minimum democratic standards in the country concerned and the existence of certain conditions concerning the work undertaken by the observers. It also sets out a code of conduct for the observers and lists the factors that should be taken into account when assessing the validity of an election. The new guidelines will serve as an important tool for the EU to effectively support processes of democratization.

In conclusion, the European Union will continue to strongly support the efforts of the movement of the new and restored democracies as well as the United Nations. As we all know from our own histories, the establishment and strengthening of democracy is not an easy task. It requires not only the sustained efforts of the entire society and wise leadership, but also international assistance. This might sometimes also include advice and even criticism. Let me assure the General Assembly that the European Union will continue its active policy in this regard.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): The item under consideration, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", is of particular importance to my country, Mali.

In this respect, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his instructive and analytical report, contained in document A/53/554. This report contains enlightening information on the follow-up process to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Democracy and Development; it also presents a summary of the activities carried out by the United Nations system in democratization and governance. My delegation has attentively studied the contents of the report and I wish briefly to lay out our thoughts on it.

It goes without saying that Mali fully endorses the mechanism established to follow up the achievements of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997. Like other new or restored democracies, my country has a special interest in this question. We believe that, in order to achieve concrete results — and this is imperative — it is important to implement the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference, which seek to strengthen the development of democracy, to promote communication and understanding among new or restored democracies, as well as cooperation with traditional democracies, or to share the progress made by the various participating countries on the way to democratization. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the proposals for the follow-up mechanism contained in the Secretary-General's report.

As we refer to activities conducted by the organs of the United Nations in the field of democratization and governance, I would like to draw attention to the following facts.

First, the question of elections in the new or restored democracies deserve to be given special attention. For, as Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali, has indicated, post-electoral periods are becoming a danger for democracy. In order to avoid a loss of control, the players in the political sphere must be able to arrive at what he called dynamic democratic compromises, based on the idea of sharing rather than exclusion.

In this context, in the very near future, a national forum will be convened, aimed at initiating calm and deep reflection on the issues and the future of Mali's democracy. The objective is to improve our democratic system in order to make it possible to give the broadest possible role to consensus and sharing, the expression of differences, pluralistic expression and the possibility of changeover of political power among parties.

Along the same lines, my delegation is of the opinion that it is important to ensure the transparency of elections, which need to be as regular as possible. To that end, the establishment of national and even regional mechanisms could be useful. In this respect, Mali welcomes the proposals made in the framework of the reforms that are under way in our Organization, aimed at rationalizing the way in which the Organization provides electoral assistance to Governments, and especially to the Governments of new or restored democracies.

The second point that must be considered with respect to the question of new or restored democracies is the question of managing the socio-economic difficulties they confront. Even when democratization goes hand in hand with economic liberalization, the social cost to be paid may be high. Economic difficulties could undermine confidence in the viability of democratic institutions.

This is why, in the view of my delegation, efforts to alleviate economic difficulties and poverty, and hence social tension, require perseverance, of course, but also unquestionably require sufficient resources, as well as international support and assistance.

The third issue, which I particularly wish to emphasize, is the growing importance of the topic of good governance and democratization in the international debate on sustainable development and peace-building. On the basis of that conviction, the Government of Mali has offered to host the third forum on governance in Africa, which will be held in Bamako in June 1999.

Mali's experience in this area shows that a redefinition of the role of the State is necessary; this is already apparent in an ambitious policy of decentralization. Thus, 682 rural townships will be established in April 1999, to be added to the 19 municipalities that already exist. Taken together, these will establish a true chain of solidarity and sharing. But populations have already initiated and successfully piloted grass-roots projects and enterprises in which authority is exercised in freedom and responsibility, in accordance with the laws and rules of the country. This applies to community schools, community health centres, village savings banks and credit unions and the community management of rural agriculture and loans.

Drawing a lesson from Mali's experience, President Konaré has noted that "the democratic management of community assets in rural areas preceded the advent of political democracy since many village cooperative and associative movements existed prior to March 1991."

These achievements in Mali are in line with the recommendations contained in the final declaration of the Bucharest International Conference regarding the role of civil society in the process of democratization. This is why my delegation welcomes all the relevant proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

I would like briefly to raise an issue that is not mentioned in the report but that is nonetheless the gravest of threats to democracy: the proliferation of light arms. Following the adoption of a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light arms in West Africa by the twenty-first session of the Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Economic Community of West African States, upon the initiative of Mali, I would like to emphasize the need to incorporate in the consideration of the question of new or restored democracies questions related to security in order to strengthen the capacities of States in this field and promote international cooperation in this respect.

I would like, in conclusion, to reiterate to the delegation of Benin my assurance of country's support in making the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies a success.

Lastly, I would like to say that my delegation co-sponsored draft resolution A/53/L.38, which has just been introduced by the representative of Romania, because we support the political message contained therein, and we hope it will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", as contained in document A/53/554.

We also welcome the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting of participating countries at the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in New York last 22 September. As we all are aware, that Meeting provided the opportunity for assessing the progress achieved in the implementation of recommendations of the Third International Conference and endorsed the follow-up mechanisms. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the follow-up mechanism underlines the progress made to improve coordination between representatives of Governments, the United Nations system and civil society.

My delegation also appreciates the creation of a Web site on democratization and governance, which is linked to the Web site created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

With a view to contributing to the development of a plan of action for the implementation of the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference, the Government of Mongolia has been constantly taking measures to promote democracy and democratization, and to that end it has widely disseminated the final document of the Bucharest Conference. An international symposium on education for democracy, with the support of UNDP, will soon be held. The publication of a book on democracy in Mongolia, reflecting Mongolia's experience during this major transformation, is also under way. Mongolia will also fully implement the project on decentralization and support for democracy in cooperation with UNDP.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/24, part I) clearly points out, in paragraph 8, that

> "Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives."

It is also stated in the Agenda for Development that efforts to promote democracy and good governance are fundamental for consolidation of peace and development.

International experience vividly demonstrates that without good governance — without the rule of law, predictable administration, legitimate power and responsive regulation — no amount of funding and no short-term economic miracle alone can set the developing world on the path to prosperity.

Mongolia is continuing to pursue its policy of political and economic reforms. Our commitment to the principles of democracy, liberalism and market economy is irreversible, despite the current difficulties of the transition period. Major policy priorities in the future will continue to be the further strengthening of democratic institutions, in broadening of the basis of political stability, further decentralization, the acceleration of privatization in the economic field and the fuller social protection of the population, especially of its vulnerable groups.

Mongolia's democracy is still in its maturation stage. Though the Government is fostering an open and participatory democracy, not all groups and individuals are yet able to realize their economic, social and political potential, and not all feel that they are sharing the benefits of an open and democratic society. Indeed, political democratization alone is not sufficient to ensure the participation of the poor and vulnerable in the economy, though it compels the Government to take heed of these groups' concerns. Weak economic and social infrastructures and low incomes mean that many people, especially in remote areas, still live in isolation from the mainstream of economic and social developments. In order to overcome the existing difficulties in the foreseeable future, external assistance and support remain important — a point just underlined by the representative of Mali.

Mongolia agrees that democracy is not a model to be copied or imposed, but rather a goal to be attained, and that the pace at which democratization can proceed is dependent on a variety of political, economic, social and cultural factors. In this respect, the Secretary-General has rightly expressed that

> "There is no one democratic model. Every democracy, like each individual, has its own character, depending on specific political, social and economic circumstances, cultures and traditions. All

> democracies, like all human beings, have their own pace of development. There will be progress, but there will also be setbacks and periods of stagnation."

My delegation fully shares the view of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the Government of Benin for its gracious offer to host the Fourth International Conference. Mongolia fully supports the convening of these international conferences at regular intervals, seeing in them a valuable forum for exchange of experience and for cooperation. Once again, I would like to express Mongolia's readiness to host one of the forthcoming conferences in my capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Finally, as a sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.38, which was introduced this morning by the representative of Romania, my delegation expresses the hope that it will be adopted without a vote, as have been such resolutions in previous years.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The efforts of the United Nations system to support democratization are, in our view, among the most important and forward-looking activities carried out by our Organization, and we are committed to giving our support to further developing the endeavours of the United Nations in this respect. Since the inception of its programmes in this area, the United Nations has undertaken manifold activities and accumulated an impressive record in this respect. This record includes work in the field of electoral assistance and programmes integrated into peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations, as well as governance programmes. Both the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have been active in this regard, mainly through technical cooperation projects, and we would like to commend them for their conceptual and operational work in this respect.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which was adopted five years ago, affirmed that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. This statement makes it very clear that efforts aimed at strengthening democracy contribute to fulfilling some of the priority objectives of the United Nations. The participation of all people and the direct involvement of the individual in the political process provide democratic societies with an unmatched opportunity to make best use of their economic and human resources and thus to achieve optimum progress towards sustainable development. Democratic systems are the best way not only of ensuring respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, but also of preventing conflicts and of creating conditions which enable people to live under prosperous conditions and to achieve social progress with better standards of life in larger freedom. While democratic systems can take on different forms according to the prevailing circumstances, there are certain constituent key elements common to all of them, such as accountability, respect for human rights, the rule of law and genuine periodic elections. Democracy is not primarily the result of a policy decision, but the outcome of an evolving and self-sustaining process which has to face and overcome new challenges every day. It is thus not only appropriate, but indeed necessary, that the United Nations assist countries which feel a need for such assistance to cope with challenges of this kind and to create a more solid basis for the future of society and all people concerned.

There is clearly a preventive dimension to the work of the United Nations system to give support to democratic systems. This dimension encompasses both the prevention of armed conflicts and massive and large-scale violations of human rights. We hold the view in general that the preventive aspects of United Nations work deserve our full political and financial support, and we are also strongly in favour of further developing the conceptual aspects of these activities.

In our opinion, there is an intrinsic link between democracy and the right of peoples of self-determination. Common article 1 of the human rights Covenants of 1966 stipulates that, by virtue of the right of self-determination, which had previously been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all peoples have the right to freely determine their political status. The holding of genuine and periodic elections, a key element of every democratic system, is thus one means of enabling peoples to exercise their right of self-determination. We also hold the view, however, that the right of self-determination has additional potential which the United Nations system should explore and develop for the benefit of peoples worldwide and as a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It has been said many times that we live in an era of democracy, and we also live in an era in which the character of armed conflicts, which are a threat to democracy, development and human rights, has changed, in that the vast majority of such conflicts today are conflicts within States. There are no indications that this trend will revert in the near future, and in such a situation the United Nations system finds itself confronted with new challenges. These include issues such as the

question of non-State actors and, in keeping with the overall necessity to enhance the preventive capacities of the United Nations system, the question of the prevention of such internal armed conflicts with all their devastating consequences.

The prevention of internal armed conflicts will, in our view, be a key element of the future activities of the United Nations. Such efforts clearly require the political will and readiness of the countries and Governments concerned, but at the same time the preparedness of the United Nations system to assist in addressing root causes of such conflicts in an efficient manner. It becomes clear on a regular basis that tensions between communities and Governments or among communities are very often the root causes of the outbreak of internal armed conflicts.

It thus seems to us indispensable that the United Nations system be ready to provide assistance to defuse such tensions before they lead to the outbreak of an actual armed conflict. Such solutions could, in our opinion, be based on the exercise of the right of self-determination consistent with other key principles of international law. A genuine and open dialogue between communities and central Governments based on a framework elaborated within the United Nations and providing for a flexible system of self-administration and self-governance could, in our view, often be the solution to such problems and thus constitute a major contribution to democracy, development and human rights. We presented our ideas on this issue to the General Assembly quite some time ago and look forward to further discussions.

Liechtenstein will continue to follow the work of the United Nations system in this area with keen interest. In the light of the developments on the African continent, and also of the relevant report of the Secretary-General, we find it most appropriate that the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will be hosted by an African country. We would therefore like to extend, in conclusion, our gratitude to the Government of Benin for its willingness to host that important event.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Central America countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, as well as the Dominican Republic.

Allow me at the outset to express appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/554, which provides us a comprehensive view of the progress made over the last year in activities to strengthen democracy and democratization in the world and of the relevant activities carried out by the United Nations.

Among the advances highlighted by the Secretary-General are, first, the various actions carried out by the mechanism to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held at Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997, with the aim of disseminating information on the programmes designed to consolidate democratic development, lend assistance in the promotion of communication, promote understanding between new or restored democracies, promote their cooperation with established democracies and share the progress achieved by each participating country towards attaining democratization.

The Web site created on democratization, the forum on democracy and the self-evaluation by Governments are just a few of the most important advances made during this period.

The promotion and protection of human rights, especially those of children, women and the elderly, is a principal concern of the government programmes of new or restored democracies. We have taken important steps in this area, but we note with concern that within the international community there are still certain sectors that resist making changes and still fail to respect human rights, especially in the civil political arena. We must work together to take appropriate and necessary actions within the framework of the United Nations Charter so that those peoples deprived of their most basic rights and freedoms may very soon join our group of nations which, thanks to our own efforts, the efforts of friendly countries and the help of God, have gone beyond violence and reorganized our public life in a participatory, multiparty democratic system with full respect for human rights.

In connection with respect for human rights, our peoples have rejected corruption and have demanded greater transparency in governmental action. These aspirations have been included in the internal legislation of our countries in order to strengthen democracy and economic development. In this regard, in our Central American region,in addition to having signed the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, we have drafted the Central American convention on the prevention and repression of the laundering of money and other assets from illegal drug-trafficking and related crimes and the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, signed in Honduras on 15

December 1995, by which we have committed ourselves to preventing and fighting all types of criminal activities with regional or international consequences, such as terrorism, sabotage and organized crime, and to impeding in our territories, through all available means, the planning, preparation and commission of such criminal activities.

Democratization must be a worldwide movement that reaches every corner of the Earth, because democracy is the system of government best attuned to the human being's natural desire for freedom. We, the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic, have learned that the democratic system is the best model to guarantee a framework of freedom that makes possible lasting and sustainable solutions to the economic, political and social problems that afflict our societies.

In the Central American region, the process of strengthening and consolidating democracy began during this decade in a very special way; there, after long years of internal conflict in a number of our countries, and after dictatorial Governments and military regimes, a solution was achieved through negotiations among the sectors in conflict. These were sponsored by friendly countries and by international organizations such as the United Nations. Now, our societies are experiencing democracy that includes political pluralism, open dialogue with civil society, recognition and protection of fundamental human rights including freedom of association and of expression, the division of powers, an independent judiciary and the subordination of the military to the civilian authorities. In our region, the State based on the rule of law has replaced despotism.

The movement of new or restored democracies, and its international conferences, have had a positive impact world wide. Since the second International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, the United Nations has participated in an appropriate manner. An objective of the second Conference, which was held in Central America — in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, in July 1994 — was to reaffirm, especially for the Central American region, the effectiveness of representative democracy as a system of government and to assess the weaknesses and prospects of new democracies and the challenges they are facing. At that Conference, 50 countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe adopted a plan of action whose objectives included promoting the acceptance of and respect for democratic principles, encouraging a broader understanding of democracy, strengthening bilateral and multilateral international cooperation and promoting support for the movement by the United Nations system and international financial institutions.

Despite the achievements of Managua and the resolutions adopted at the third International Conference, held at Bucharest in September 1997, we note that young or emerging democracies still need additional support in the social, political and economic spheres if they are to consolidate their representative democracies and the irreversible establishment of a State based on the rule of law, guaranteeing the safety and security of their citizens.

At the Bucharest Conference, ministers and other representatives of new democracies recognized the weakness of Government structures with respect to maintaining order, avoiding corruption and promoting respect for the law; we therefore reaffirmed the urgency of combatting the unemployment that leads to dire poverty and to increased corruption and crime.

To reach the goals set at the Manila, Managua and Bucharest International Conferences, we agreed on recommendations for States, civil society and the donor community. Among the recommendations to Governments, I would highlight promoting and protecting human rights, ensuring the complete independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, promoting laws against corruption, respecting the participation of the political opposition and making possible genuine, sustainable development.

Our delegations support the continued activity of the movement of new democracies. We therefore welcome the offer by an African country, Benin, to host the fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

Let me conclude by making reference to a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Montealegre Rivas, at the Ministerial Meeting of New or Restored Democracies held at United Nations Headquarters on 22 September 1998, at which the minister was a guest speaker. In his statement he reiterated the Nicaraguan Government's unswerving commitment to continuing its active participation in the movement, within the framework of the Central American Integration System, and its readiness to share the challenges we decide jointly to address, with a view to entering the new millennium with a community of nations free of all the disheartening vestiges of the past and bequeathing a better world to future generations.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.